

RollPlay



GM NOTEBOOK
ISSUE FORTY-TWO

Hello Patrons!

Welcome to 2020! We're going in strong this year with Court of Swords, Echoes of Eternity and Far Verona and we've already put in a brand-new one shot GM'd by Vana. Despite my constant hassling, neither of our other GMs this month had any material for the zine, and frankly that just makes me think they probably don't want to share their secret secrets with you! Which, as a GM, I appreciate. Sometimes you wanna keep some things in your back pocket. Not me though, I've got all kinds of Far Verona and Court of Swords content for you this month! I'll keep pestering Jesse and our guests to see if I can wring some material out of them. Hope you enjoy my notes, thoughts and insight in the mean time.

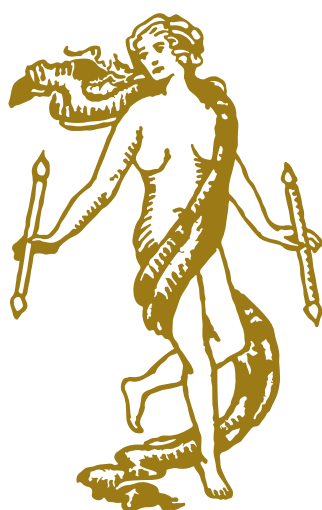
Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 42 of the GM's Notebook.

Adam Koebel
RollPlay GM



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Court of Swords:

Power in the Riverland

(Episode 136+)



RAMUS (15)

- Find a means to enhance my ability to speak to others (easy)
 - training from someone with experience & then proficiency training (Persuasion)
 - magical boon from a god or power known for charisma
 - magic items (crafted or found)
 - find someone to speak for him
- Recruit a proselytizer for Harmony (medium)
 - Embers (already have a religion)
 - Disenfranchised Peasants (find a way to free them from Grave Dirt)
 - Convert Ten Pillars?
 - Buy a professional crier or messenger from civilization
 - Conquer somewhere and force it to be the state religion, then create missionaries
 - do something “heroic” to save people in need, then convert them
- Convince Maharib that Harmony is the future (deadly)

BERG (15)

- Explore a deeper meaning behind the vision (easy)
 - research the Axe or the Hammer in the Sun’s archive library
 - consult with Vani, go into a trance of some kind
 - have Ramus cast spells to help him learn about the vision
 - find someone to help him relive it through magic, etc.
- Find a way to prevent future possession (medium)
 - feats that improve Charisma save
 - magic items to protect from possession
 - a boon from a god or spirit that defends the sanctity of the body
- Safeguard Vani from the dangers of her new position (easy)
 - disagreements with Bahath (Darth Vader syndrome)
 - threats from without (the Court, the Mara, the Red Talon Society)
 - religious conflict with Ramus over Primordialism (Imixianism) vs. Harmony

MAHARIB (15)

- understand the power behind the axe (medium)
 - continued attempts to commune with the Axe
 - a vision from Vani
 - more of Ramus' magic
 - die?
 - go back to the void?
 - interrogate Grave Dirt
 - find an expert on the Mara
- work with bahath to understand the past (medium)
 - discuss things with Bahath
 - consult Vani's knowledge
 - talk to A'wut
 - return to the tribe
 - find some of his past victims
 - research in the Sun's library or other source of knowledge
- convince the embers to move to the xulin valley (medium)
 - The Valley is a long way away through a dangerous terrain with two separate enemy forces scattered throughout.
 - talk to Awut
 - talk to Vani
 - talk to Bahath

TEN PILLARS OF GOLD (15)

- Return to Gravedirt with a newly Soul'd unnamed (medium)
 - - easy, just go back to Gravedirt with Bahath
- Learn the extent of Bahath's power (easy)
 - study Bahath
 - test Bahath to see what they can do
 - research past incarnations
 - talk to Vani
 - put Bahath in a position where they have to fight to survive
- Keep the Embers safe from Grave Dirt (medium)*

*someone from a group of Embers (a young warrior named Jai) returns early to the Fortress, having had his group captured by servants of Grave Dirt - they're in the camp now.**

If the characters ignore this call for help, then Jai and a few others will return to the camp, get captured and eventually this will lead Grave Dirt to the Fortress.

Perhaps she sends an emissary...

Themes of Power:

- Bahath represents:
 - heedless aggression
 - pure power
 - thoughtlessness
 - passion
 - destruction
- Grave Dirt / the Mara:
 - inevitability
 - patience and plotting
- upheaval of what is normal
- corruption
- Heaven / the Courts:
 - tradition
 - power of belief
 - monetary power
 - delicate balance

Front: The Power in the Riverlands:

if the player characters leave the area for an extended period of time...

- ☐ Bahath and Grave Dirt skirmish over territory
- ☐ **Grave Dirt discovers the Fortress of the Embers
- ☐ Bahath escalates and the Embers assault the Monastery of the Sun
- ☐ The Embers are routed, most are killed, survivors flee to the Fortress
- ☐ Grave Dirt begins the siege of the Fortress
- ☐ Grave Dirt infects the Embers with a killing sickness
- ☐ Most of the remaining Embers die of disease
- ☐ A schism forces some of the survivors underground into the dwarven tunnels
- ☐ the remaining Embers attempt to break the siege and are killed, Bahath is killed or enslaved by Grave Dirt

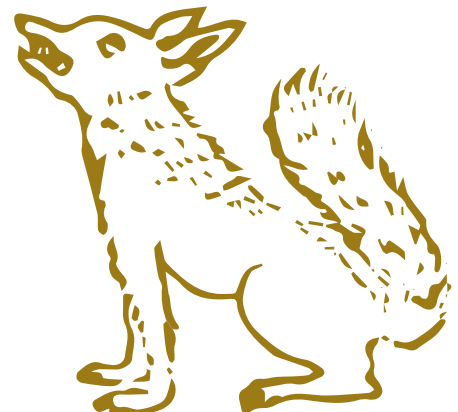
The Journey to Xulin

LOGISTICS:

Moving about a hundred followers of Imix, composed of young and old, some capable some less so, plus whatever recruits they bring back to the Fortress. Travelling from a mountain cave to a valley in the north through heavy jungle, dangerous mountains and enemy-infested territory to resettle somewhere farther from the imminent conflict.

OPTIONS:

- trek through the mountains using old dwarven roads
- trek through the jungle using peasant paths and village roads
- go east to the river, then north to the new border and west again to the Valley
- magic
 - teleportation circle
 - airship
 - moon temple highway
 - void shortcut
 - steal a Farang vessel, use it to transdimensionally relocate, arrive in Valley?!



Belligerents

THE FORCES OF DARKNESS:

- Mouth Full of Worm-Ridden Grave Dirt, Mara General
- Last Bastard of a Dead Lineage, Undead Bodyguard
- Sen, a little god
- A significant cadre of undead soldiers
- A small army of disenfranchised anti-Court peasants
- Veteran Officers trained and tested in battle

THE LEGITIMATE POWER:

- The King, Queen and Page of Swords in the Northern Capital
- The various soldiers who still remain in the field, attempting to fight
- A handful of fortresses and strongholds scattered throughout the Court of Swords
- Southern Wind, Captain of the Court of Swords (???)
- The meddling of the Court of Coins, looking to engineer a “protectorate”

THE PRIMORDIAL CULT:

- Vani, Eldritch Mother

- A’wut, technically in charge
- Bahath, living flame and avatar of Imix
- Lay Followers
- Warriors of the Embers

THE WILD CARD:

- Kheiu, the leader of the Bloody Scale Revenge Society
- Lum, a wind dragon
- A bunch of kobolds
- Some disenfranchised humans, too

MERCENARY OPTIONS:

- Goliath Warriors
- Court of Coins Mercenary Company
- A Tribe of Orcs (Ilneval Myth)

TO DO:

- update improve and generally repair
- ### Inspiration
- give Grave Dirt some magic items / tailor her spell list
 - stat block for Bahath
 - study up on Warfare rules
 - consider Southern Wind



FAAR

VERONA

FACTION TURN: INFLUENCE RULES

>> // INFLUENCE

We know that the Planetary Government tag provides some benefits and lore explanation. Whoever has that tag is the functioning government of the Planet. What we don't know is how much influence other Factions have on the culture of that planet.

Founding Principles:

- × influence is a measured byproduct, not a separate commodity
- × influence is a subsystem we will use to determine lore primacy
- × influence is a subsystem we will use to qualify goal eligibility
- × influence is not a direct statistic, and shifts regularly

Founding Principles:

- × clarify lore responsibility and authority
- × help flavour the individual planets
- × create another vector for competition
- × give Factions with lore or ideological priorities a mechanical way to asset those priorities
- × influential superiority (maybe you can retire after you get X influence)
- × set requirements for Goals

Iteration 1.0 (Limited Influence Model):

- × each planet has a finite clock based on how many people live there (more pop = bigger clock) with factions influencing that planet filling in segments of the clock with their own colour.
 - × Each Asset is worth X
 - × Each Bol is worth Y
 - × Tags are worth Z (Planetary Government, Homeworld, etc.)
- × There's a scarcity of Influence, and once it's full you have to take it from someone who already has it.

Iteration 1.1 (Unlimited Influence Model):

- × same as LIM but there's no cap on how much Influence a Faction can have, it's not a race, it's about percentage at any given time
 - × Each Asset is worth X
 - × Each Bol is worth Y
 - × Tags are worth Z (Planetary Government, Homeworld, etc.)
- × When we need to understand Influence (for lore purposes primarily) we can look and see who has what amount of influence, with no limit to who participates

Iteration 1.2 (Unlimited Multiplier Influence Model):

- × same as LIM but there's no cap on how much Influence a Faction can have, it's not a race, it's about percentage at any given time
- × Planetary Population acts as a multiplier to total influence
 - × Each Asset is worth X
 - × Each Bol is worth Y
 - × Tags are worth Z (Planetary Government, Homeworld, etc.)

Interactions:

- × passively, with Assets on planet
- × passively, with Tags
- × actively by taking a Turn action
- × actively by using an Asset ability
- × pvp interaction proxied by Assets
- × passively by extension (adjacent influence increase?)

How Much Influence is Available, How Much are Things Worth?:

- × each planet has Tiers available based on population, which act as multipliers to Influence:
 - × Failed Colony: 0
 - × Outpost: x1
 - × Fewer Than a Million: x2
 - × Several Million: x3

- × Hundreds of Millions: x4
- × Billions: x5
- × Alien Civilization: x1
- × Tech Level As Modifier
 - × TL 5 x2
 - × TL 4+ x1.5
 - × TL 4 x1
 - × TL 3 x0.75
 - × TL 2 x0.5
 - × TL 1 x0.25
- × each Faction Has Assets and Tags to Add Up Influence:
 - × Base of Influence = 1 per hp (current)
 - × Homeworld Tag = 10
 - × Each Asset = 1
 - × Planetary Government = +2
 - × Miscellaneous Bonuses or Penalties
 - × Faction Tags



WHAT MISCELLANEOUS BONUSES, PENALTIES AND TAGS APPLY?:

Faction Tags

- × Cultural Influencer

Planet Tags:

Quarantined World	0.7
Tomb World	0.7
Hivemind	0.8
Out of Contact	0.8
Prison Planet	0.8
Zombies	0.8
Cheap Life	0.9
Colonized Population	0.9
Dying Race	0.9
Hostile Biosphere	0.9
Hostile Space	0.9
Minimal Contact	0.9
Radioactive World	0.9

Rigid Culture	0.9
Exchange Consulate	1.1
Gold Rush	1.1
Local Specialty	1.1
Local Tech	1.1
Pilgrimage Site	1.1
Post-Scarcity	1.1
Urbanized Surface	1.1
Major Spaceyard	1.2
Pleasure World	1.2
Sole Supplier	1.2
Trade Hub	1.2
Cultural Power	1.2
Police State	Special
Secret Masters	Special



NEW TAG: CULTURAL INFLUENCER

This Faction's Assets are particularly good at altering the cultural and social behaviour of the populations of the planets they are present on. All Assets belonging to this Faction grant an additional 50% Influence each. In Addition, becoming the Planetary Government grants an additional 50% influence to that bonus.

To Calculate:

PCVI:	Base Population x TL, Modified by Planet Tags
Presence:	(Non-BOI Assets + Bol Hp + Pgov) Modified by Faction Tags × Homeworld
Total Influence:	Presence*PCVI

Problems to Solve / Questions to Answer

- × does a Faction's influence cap out?
- × does Homeworld give some kind of minimum base? permanently fill some slots despite other rules, gives a baseline influence?
- × what impact to "dead" factions have on Influence / how do we remove that influence in-game?
- × a tag to reduce influence on planets?

In the Distant Future:

- × a planet / system / sector “happiness” rating
- × localized non-Faction resistance, rebellions, etc.
- × Planet Tags affecting more than Fiction



TEST PLANET: NAVETTE (X2 PLANET)

Trilliant:	5hp Bol (10 Influence) + 3 Assets (6 Influence) + PG (4) = 20 Influence
High Church:	5hp Bol (10 Influence) = 10 Influence
Vagrant:	2 Assets (4 Influence) = 4 Influence
Serpens:	1hp Bol (2 Influence) + 1 Assets (2 Influence) = 4 Influence
The Deathless:	1 hp Bol (2 Influence) = 2 Influence
Total Influence: 40 Influence	
50% Trilliant, 25% HC, 10% Each Vagrant and Serpens, 5% Deathless	

TEST PLANET: ORPHEUS

Several Million People, TL 4 (3) Cultural Power x1.3	
House Crux:	Party Machine, Pretech Infantry (7.8 total)
House Lyra (v1):	Party Machine, Party Machine, Bol (1hp) + Homeworld + PGov (15x3.9) (58.5 total)
House Lyra (v2):	Party Machine, Party Machine, Bol (1hp) + Homeworld + PGov + Faction Tag (50% increase per asset or PGOV) [1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5 + 10 + 3 = 17.5] (68.25 total)
House Lyra (v3):	Party Machine, Party Machine, Bol (14hp) + Homeworld + PGov [1.5 + 1.5 + 21 + 10 + 3 = 37] (144.3 total)

TEST PLANET: ECHO

Hundreds of Millions, TL 4 (4)

Cultural Power x1.3

Planetary Cultural Value Index = 5.2

PRISM v1:

- × 29 HP Bol (29)
- × 2x Marketers (2)
- × 5x Party Machine (5)
- × 1x Shipping Combine (1)
- × Homeworld (10)
- × PGov (2)
- × Presence: (49)
- × Total Influence: 254.8

× PRISM v2:

- × 29 HP Bol (29) (43.5)
- × 2x Marketers (2)(3)
- × 5x Party Machine (5)(7.5)
- × 1x Shipping Combine (1)(1.5)
- × Homeworld (10)
- × PGov (2)(3)

Presence:

(68.5)

Total Influence:

356.2

Triangulum:

1HP Bol / S (0.75)
Covert Shipping / S (.75)

Presence:

1.5

Total:

7.8

TEST PLANET: BORA

Hundreds of Millions, TL 1 (1)

Quarantined World 0.7

Tomb World 0.7

Planetary Cultural Value Index = 0.4

Triangulum:

Base of Influence /s (1hp) (0.75)
Covert Shipping (1)
Party Machine /s (0.75)

Presence:

2.5

Total:

1

Court of Swords:

DM Notes

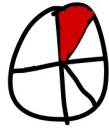
Episode: 134, 135 & 137

FAR

VERONA

// 13 AND 14

Court of Swords 134



- when did Ramus have a cat?
- "she needs to die" Grave Dirt? Yiiiiikes!

[Nisha, the Eldritch Mother]

hugh-

FAR JERONA SOLE 13

- Cunn 3
- decep 2

thug ~~outside~~ x/4

inside: thug 2
[soak 4] thug 3
thug 4

leader: ~~dead~~ 0 / 15
[soak 5]

The goons are part of a minor crime syndicate in Pilgrim's Gate. They're beating up hugh because they have info that he knows where the sudden drug competition is coming from.

The pharmacy was left alone, mostly, but the printer tech was threatened, he gave them the description of Autumn, which led them to Hugh.

The goons have no idea who the PCs are, besides their being competition.

someone (trigulum?) gave them 2 tips.

Martyn wants to blend in: his core programming is to befriend the PCs + report in on their activities.

[Controller Eridanus Hviik, Magda] [Rosa Dreschler, Trillion Scientist]

meanwhile; Johnny, Autumn and Martyn ...

1:00pm

[the 121 gang]

"Peanuts"

STREET TOUGH (MINION)

The street tough is one of the go-to villains of any setting. These belligerent petty criminals are a reasonable first opponent for your PCs to beat up without your having to worry that they may kill the group by accident. If you're worried they may be too tough, however, have them use their studded gloves and deal damage to your PCs' strain threshold.



Skills (group only): Brawl, Coercion, Melee.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Studded gloves (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; **Disorient 2, Knockdown**), club (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]), heavy clothing (+1 soak).

GANG LEADER (RIVAL)

Your groups of street toughs can be led by the gang leader, another go-to opponent who fits into all settings. The gang leader is a tough individual who runs small-time criminal operations with an iron fist. This can be a good opponent for a group to face off with at the climax of their first or second session, especially if the gang leader is backed up by a minion group of street toughs.



Skills: Coercion 1, Cool 1, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Really big and sharp knife (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; **Pierce 2**), heavy leather clothing (+2 soak).

FAR VERONA, CONT'D

Martyn ↗

2	3	4	3	5	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
2	12	20	4	4	

Skills: Athletics 2, Coordination 2, Discipline 4, Driving 2, Melee 3, Ranged (Light) 3, Piloting 2, Perception 3, Streetwise 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade the difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Apparent Precognition (once per encounter when making a combat check, may use Discipline and Willpower instead of the normal skill and characteristic), ~~Psychic (as a maneuver, may make an Average [◆◆] Vigilance check to learn the surface thoughts of all other characters in medium range)~~, Broken Nisei Conditioning (when inflicting a Critical Injury or Critical Hit, roll twice and choose the more severe result).

Equipment: Auto-fletcher (Ranged [Light]; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Pierce 2, Vicious 2), micro-waterknife (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Prepare 1, Sunder, Unwieldy 3, Vicious 3).

"The situation with Landra"

- Landra was put into the protective custody of the Deathless Mercenary Company
- The ship she was on, the "Four to Go" was ambushed by pirates, who killed the crew
- Landra managed to convince the Hatagin that she is the last true scion of the House of Dorado, a Shāmite myth that allowed her to take a tense and limited control over the crew of the vessel Oceans of Time.
- currently, she's on Argjast trying to keep the cannibal crew from bringing her to Shān, where she'll certainly be found out.

[device: big smoke
device: pipe bomb

* the ship!
+ hugh?

+ Hadeel stats

3	2	1	2	1	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
4	5	0	0		

Skills (group only): Brawl, Coercion, Melee, Ranged (Light), Streetwise.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Threatening (when providing assistance on another character's Coercion checks, add ★ to results for each minion in the group beyond the first).

Equipment: Pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Medium]), mono-switchblade (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2), synthleather jacket (+1 soak), extensive tattoos and piercings.

Gangers ↗ 11

2	2	4	3	1	3
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE		
2	10	15	0	0	

Skills: Cool 1, Knowledge (Society) 4, Negotiation 3, Perception 3, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Haughty Demeanor (other characters add ★ to social skill checks targeting ristie collector).

Abilities: Shrewd Negotiator (when making an opposed Negotiation or Streetwise check to purchase or sell an item, may suffer 2 strain to add ★ to the results), Let's Make a Deal (if this character knows an opponent's Desire Motivation, when they inflict strain on the opponent, the opponent suffers 4 additional strain).

Equipment: Heavily encrypted PAD, several credsticks.

Diocles Cowden ↗

18
6

soak 4
ranged +2
2
3

COURT OF SWORDS: Episode 135

- 1) thanks to Berg, Vani survives and in a ritual of transference, becomes the eldritch mother of the Embers
- 2) Bahath allows the PCs (mainly Ramus) to act as advisor, and begins to plan for a future assault on the former monastery of the Sun
- 3) meanwhile, Grave Dirt has been performing some necromancy of her own: she has a new apprentice; a warrior named * Last Bastard of a Dead Lineage. She is the body of Amira, reanimated with foul p'o magic. She remembers only bits of her old "life" and hates the PCs (essentially she's been turned against the PCs) * She's a Death Knight, now

NPCs

A'wut wants safety + prosperity for his people.

Vani wants glory and power for the worshippers of Imix.

Bahath wants to find fuel and consume it, returning more and more of his power as he does.

Grave Dirt wants to serve the Great Green Worm, and be rewarded for it.

The Great Green worm wants to destroy reality in the most awful way possible.

(figure out mercenaries!)

Grave Dirt's Servants: + we need a better system for Inspiration

- herself, a lich of some power
- Sen, a god and ally
- Last Bastard, a death knight
- conscripted peasants
- fighting men
- the living dead



Servants of the Firelord

- the PCs
- Bahath the Conflagrant
- Vani
- the Embers themselves

[A'wut is gas'd to sleep on regular.]

136 Notes

- Jai comes looking for help
- 3 weeks' travel to the capital in the south (Tahn Pho) [Tahn Pō] *
- the remnant brigade are hardened and jaded, but faithful
- Bahath waits several days then acts

* Tahn Pō is a necropolis, the living serve the dead here and the city feels like the void.

Remnant:

- Captain Southern Wind
- Priestess Lamai, of the Chariot
- Lieutenant Kiet

FAR VERONA

[S02E14]

~~11:45~~ ~~11:10~~

next step: Martyn

1) the local gangsters, the 121, are only a smaller branch of criminal goofballs who are backed by a larger criminal organization that tracks back to House Triangulum (via their "new" Red Dogs acquisitions) if the PCs want to continue the investigation. This show isn't exactly a police procedural, though. Here's a Front:

☒ the 121, sellers of the drug shatter (under the name "hourglass") discover a sudden drop in their sales

☒ investigating, they're tipped off to the pharmacy, where Ernesto gives up the security footage of Autumn

☒ Shark, with help from "the boss" finds the shop and goes to investigate

☒ when Shark goes missing, after a few days, the boss sends her own negotiator, to convince the PCs they owe him a cut, plus back "taxes" on what they already owe.

☐ if refused, the boss calls on resources to burn down the store + kill the PCs

the boss: Rhea McQueen, a businesswoman in charge of the Hamasa Cartel, a loose collection of gangs operating in Pilgrim's Gate. has ties to the House of Triangulum via her "Suppliers" whose identities are kept from her.

her negotiator: Diocles Cowden, a former High Church priest, defrocked for using Confessional information for his own benefit.

As for Martyn... he's a different unit, sent to root out the PCs. His prime directive is to observe, infiltrate and lead the PCs to Crux for Retirement. He doesn't necessarily know this. He's got a kind of Jekyll + Hyde thing going on. Give the PCs about 12 hours before he finds the shop.

Count of Swords : 137

- Vani looking after the cash
 - Addi-Kür, dwarf holy artisan (beer)
- [Daqartûm, Nisabz, Ereshûm]

↓
↓ she's seen Void metal

killed by trolls, who live in the ruins of Batrz-Nûnt an old dwarven trading post.

survival: 18, 17

[Woz-roq-clud-flak-bur-dung
[Fat Boy]]

